

Appl. No. 09/667,434
Amendment dated January 26, 2006
Reply to Final Action of December 21, 2005
Atty. Docket No. AP628US

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1 - 24, 30 - 32, 38 - 55, and 65 - 75 are pending in the application.

Claims 25 - 29, 33 - 37 and 56 - 64, having previously been withdrawn from consideration, have now been cancelled without prejudice.

Claims 2 - 24, 30 - 32, 38 - 55, 65 and 68 - 75 have been allowed.

Claims 1, 66 and 67 were rejected in the Final action. Claim 1 was rejected as anticipated by Curtis *et al.* and claims 66 and 67 as obvious in view of the combination of Curtis *et al.* with Noro.

The undersigned thanks the examiner for discussing the rejection of claim 1 and the applied references by telephone on January 18, 2006 and January 25, 2006.

As discussed, Curtis *et al.*'s audio distribution unit (14) has output ports connected to at least one set of a first and a second audio transducer (42, 44) having an associated remote unit (20) associated with them and connected to the audio distribution unit (14) by a set of four conductors (12, 22, 24, 26). The remote unit (20) does not, however, control the audio distribution unit (14). Rather, the remote unit (20) merely comprises a power amplifier having a potentiometer which the user can use to control the local power amplifier and adjust local volume in the remote location. The remote unit (20) does not control any of the functions of the central audio distribution unit (14) itself.

In contrast, in embodiments of the present invention, the remote unit (34A) transmits digital data signals to the audio distribution unit (10) to control its functions, such as audio source selection, tone and balance adjustment, and even the remote location to which a particular audio signal is to be supplied. This is neither disclosed nor suggested by Curtis *et al.*

The foregoing amendments to claim 1 make it clearer that the remote unit (34A...34D) does not control the local speaker directly, as in Curtis *et al.*'s system, but rather controls the audio distribution unit (10) by means of digital data signals which are transmitted to the audio distribution unit (10) by way of the same conductors that carry the power signal to the remote unit. It is noted that the present applicant's power amplifiers 24A(L), ..., 24D(R) are within the broken-line box 10 depicting the audio distribution unit, and the only communication path between the audio distribution unit 10 and the remote units 34A ... 34D is by way of the speaker conductors connecting the audio distribution unit 10 to the respective remote locations.

Accordingly, it is submitted that, as amended, claim 1 is patentable over the disclosure by Curtis *et al.* Claims 66 and 67, being dependent upon claim 1, include all of its features, so they are patentable for the same reasons. Notwithstanding that, it is also submitted that the combination of references did not render claims 66 and 67 obvious because Noro (US 5,297,211) discloses using infrared but with separate conductors, and Curtis *et al.*'s microphone is at the audio distribution unit - as in a paging system. In embodiments of the present invention, the microphone is at the remote location, i.e., where the audio transducers are.

During the telephone interview, the examine raised the question of a third search and, hence, submission of a Request for Continued Examination. With respect, it is submitted that a third search should not be necessary. The amendments merely make explicit what was implicit in claim 1 when

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construed in the context of the specification. No substantive new issues have been raised, so the previous searches should have revealed any pertinent prior art, especially since some of the original claims recite similar criteria; for example claim 12 recites "receiver means (72) coupled to said grounds for receiving said data signals and means (40) responsive to said data signals for controlling operation of said audio distribution unit (10) in dependence thereupon."

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that all extant claims are patentable over the cited references and the applicant respectfully requests early and favourable reconsideration and allowance of the application.



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